YOUTH AND AGE.

BY JAMES SPEDDING.

When I was a freshman old age did appear
A reverend and beautiful thing;
For knowledge must gather as year follows year
And wisdom from knowledge should spring.
But I found that the years that supplied me with knowledge
Took the power to digest it away,
And let out all the stores I had gathered at college
Thro' leaks that increased every day;
And I said it, and think not I said it in jest,
For you'll find it is true to the letter,
That the only thing old people ought to know best
Is that young people ought to know better.

The New-York Tribune.

SUNDAY, JUNE 25, 1905.

It would be interesting to know the precise extent to which the decoration of American houses is being influenced by the publication of many books concerned with the subject in one way or another. Of course our architects count for most in the matter, and probably the professional decorators and the dealers could both claim a certain share in the general improvement which has been brought about in respect to wall papers, furniture and so on. But the books we have in mind must also be serving a useful purpose. There are more of them than there ever were before, and they are better in quality. Does the owner of a new house, or of an old one, for that matter, desire guidance as to all the kinds of chairs and tables, of hangings and rugs, of styles of woodwork or of metal decoration, he can easily find a book covering the history of his subject, and so well illustrated that he can face the dealers with greatly increased self-possession, and put his house in shape along consistent lines. These publications must be making a difference to the venders of old laces, old glass and similar objects of the collector's zeal, as well as to the dealers in furniture, tapestries and the like, for they are steadily narrowing the area of ignorance in America where these things are concerned.

In a letter to the late Lady Dilke, written when she was Mrs. Mark Pattison, the French critic, Eugène Müntz, said to her: "You are called . . . to exert the most salutary influence on art criticism. . . . I treat as a public misfortune all that could suspend or hinder your original work. Let me say more: you have caused us Frenchmen to blush by raising to one [Claude] who is a glory of our nation that monument which he had not previously possessed." That was a fine tribute, and she deserved such words of appreciation not only for her book on Claude, but for her two volumes on "The Renaissance of Art in France," for the four in which she embodied the history of eighteenth century French art in such wise as to make her work a classic, and for divers other literary achievements of a similarly high character. Yet her second husband, Sir Charles W. Dilke, has deemed it wise to publish a volume in her memory which contains less than three hundred pages, and only half the space is devoted to biographical matters; all that is left being filled with Lady Dilke's "Book of the Spiritual Life." Now we note this instance of reserve and compression, not to find fault with it, but to point out the perfect example it sets for future biographers. Lady Dilke lived a busy life. She made solid additions to the literature of art; she bore an effective part in public affairs; she numbered scores of the leading spirits of her time amongst her friends and correspondents; yet through the exercise of tact and skill on the part of her biographer she is adequately commemorated in a small octavo.

A kindred point of interest has recently been brought up again by the publication of the "Life and Letters of J. H. Shorthouse." In many quarters the thing which seems to have struck the readers of the work with most force has been the fact that he remained essentially a "single book author," in spite of his having written a good deal of other matter which found its way into print. For our own part we believe that "The Little Schoolmaster Mark" is as fine a performance in its way as "John Inglesant," but let us admit, for the sake of argument, that the latter book is the only one by which Shorthouse will be permanently known. Must we also assume, as so many readers seem really anxious to assume, that there was something unnatural, something to be deplored, about his never having repeated his one great success? It seems to us that there is no superstition in the world of letters quite so ridiculous as the superstition which will not allow a reader to rest content with one work of art from a given author. It is not only ridiculous but harmful. Every year we see some clever man or woman, the author of a good book, urged, as though the fate of nations depended upon it, to throw his or her energies into another volume. No doubt the individual does not always need prompting, but it is certain that in many cases the second book would be infinitely better for counsels of delay. And the exasperating thing is that nobody concerned means any harm. It is simply that people are not yet accustomed to the idea that an author may have only one good book in his brain, and that it is as reasonable as it is honorable for him to rest forever on the laurels it brings him, troubling the printers no more.

THE SOUL OF RUSSIA.

How It Has Expressed Itself in Modern Literature.

RUSSIAN LITERATURE. By P. Kropotkin. 8vo, pp. x, 341. McClure, Phillips & Co.

ANTHOLOGY OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE. From the Earliest Period to the Present Time. By Leo Wiener. In two volumes. 8vo, pp. xvii, 447; xi, 500. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Of the two powers now at war in the East, Japan is, of course, the more difficult for the onlooker to understand, yet Russia is not by any means without secrets profoundly baffling to foreigners. The way to the soul of that great, unwieldy country is beset with pitfalls for the alien inquirer. We may read volume after volume by travellers who have explored this or that corner of the Czar's empire, and still be in the dark as to countless matters which bear upon the life of the people. For trustworthy guidance in that direction we must consult the nation's own interpreters, its poets, novelists and other authors, and they, we fear, are not half as widely known in America as they ought to be. Tolstoy is familiar in translations, and recently Tourgenieff has been made accessible in English versions of his complete works, where for years only scattered productions of his were available. Some of the books of Gogol and Dostoyevsky have been translated, and to-day the newest of Russian authors, Maxim Gorki, is published in English almost as a matter of course. Yet it cannot be said that we know Russian literature as we know French, for example, or German, or Italian, and therefore a book like Prince Kropotkin's is more than ordinarily welcome. It gives us a concise but sufficiently comprehensive survey of the subject, and in doing so it not only makes us better acquainted with certain men of letters, but throws interesting light on the soul of Russia.

That it has been for centuries a soul in travail is one of the commonplaces of the history books, but Prince Kropotkin gives us a deeper sense of the bitterness of that struggle in which the genius of the people has sought to express itself in works of authorship. Explicitly and between the lines we are made to feel, as we read this book, that Russian literature has carried a terrible handicap in the shape of the Russian autocracy. The writers of the country started with two priceless possessions—with almost illimitable resources of folklore, and with a language which Prince Kropotkin declares "is especially rich for rendering various shades of human feeling—tenderness and love, sadness and merriment—as also various degrees of the same action." But the men born to the enjoyment of these things have had to reckon, through generation after generation, with a form of civilization persistently inimical to the free and fruitful exercise of their gifts, to the best development of the soil, and the instrument lying nominally ready to their hands. There is a doleful recurrence of the tragic note in the biographical parts of Prince Kropotkin's book. His authors are constantly in grave trouble, if they are not actually bound for Siberia or the scaffold. Of the first figure of importance with whom he deals, an eighteenth century scholar, he speaks in this wise: "Poverty, his salary being confiscated as a punishment; detention at the police station; exclusion from the senate of the academy; and, worst of all, political persecution—such was the fate of Lomonosoff." His fate was to be matched by that of almost every other writer who came after him. The heart-rending fact is written into the very grain of Russian literature.

Catherine II began her reign in a mood favorable to the growth of liberal ideas. "An academy of belles-lettres was founded, and Princess Vorontsova-Dashkova—who had aided Catherine II in her coup d'état against her husband, Peter III, and in taking possession of the throne—was nominated president of the Academy of Sciences." The Empress had her poet laureate, Derzhavin, and she herself used the pen with considerable assiduity outside the sphere of state affairs. But the moment she saw liberal ideas going too far for the preservation of the scheme of government she preferred, she persecuted the men who were their advocates. She looked amiably for a time upon Novikoff, the bookseller, but it was not long before she had him arrested and condemned to death; and though he escaped paying the final penalty, the fifteen years he spent in the fortress of Schusselburg left him unfitted to make profitable use of the freedom granted him by Paul I, when the latter ascended the throne. When Radischeff, a political writer of the eighteenth century, dared to air his adverse opinions of serfdom, Catherine herself wrote a criticism of his book, and, after confining him in a fortress, sent him to Siberia. A year after his release he committed suicide, and to this day his "Journey to St. Petersburg to Moscow," the work which landed him in captivity, is forbidden in Russia. "A new edition of it, which was made in 1872, was confiscated and destroyed," says Prince Kropotkin, "and in 1888 the permission was given to a publisher to issue the work in editions of a hundred copies only, which were to be distributed among a few men of science and certain high functionaries." Other incidents might be cited, but this is enough to show that the disabilities under which the makers of Russian literature labored in the eighteenth century were carried over into the nineteenth and still endure.

Pushkin and Lermontoff suffered as their predecessors had suffered, and, in fact, as we go down through the list, we seem never to have done with the story of genius fighting tooth and nail to avoid strangulation. But what makes Russian literature interesting is not simply the succession of personal tragedies running through it; it is the reaction of those tragedies upon the whole character of that literature. Perhaps the most significant passage written by Prince Kropotkin is the following:

> Literary criticism has in Russia certain special aspects. It is not limited to a criticism of works of art from the purely literary or æsthetic point of view. Whether a Rudin, or a Katerina are types of real, living beings, and whether the novel or the drama is well built, well developed and well written—these are, of course, the first questions considered. But they are soon answered; and there are infinitely more important questions which are raised in the thoughtful mind by every work of really good art—the questions concerning the position of a Rudin or a Katerina in society; the part, bad or good, which they play in it; the ideas which inspire them, and the value of these ideas; and then—the actions of the heroes, and the causes of these actions, both individual and social. In a good work of art the actions of the heroes are evidently what they would have been under similar conditions in reality; otherwise it would not be good art. They can be discussed as facts of life.
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> But these actions and their causes and consequences open the widest horizons to a thoughtful critic, for an appreciation of both the ideals and the prejudices of society, for the analysis of passions, for the discussion of the types of men and women which prevail at a given moment—in fact, a good work of art gives material for discussing nearly the whole of the mutual relations in a society of a given type. The author, if he is a thoughtful poet, has himself, either consciously or often unconsciously, considered all that. It is his life experience which he gives in his work. Why, then, should not the critic bring before the reader all those thoughts which must have passed through the author's brain or have affected him unconsciously when he produced these scenes, or pictured that corner of human life?

Why not, indeed, since this attitude of the critic is the attitude of every author, and of every reader, in Russia? Prince Kropotkin alludes to "the social influence" of certain of Tourgenieff's sketches. The Russian writer always has a social influence if he is worth his salt. In other words, Russian literature is essentially the product of a race dissatisfied with its condition, and perpetually engaged in thinking and talking about the reasons for change, or the possibilities of change. This literature is critical, satirical, ethical, argumentative, passionate—everything that a literature could not be if it were created in an ivory tower, lifted above the joys and sorrows, especially the sorrows, of daily life. Even Tourgenieff, the most consummate artist of them all, is sensitive, whether he is at home or is in Paris, to the ground swell of humanitarian feeling which stirs the masses of his countrymen. No ivory tower for him, or for any of his fellow craftsmen in the long line of Russian thinkers. For him, as for them all, the wide spaces of nature, the impact upon the mind of poignant human sensation, and, through everything that goes to the making of a book, the sense of conflict, of mission. Art for art's sake has never gained a permanent foothold in Russia. It has been rather art for the sake of man, for the sake of Russia and the Russians.

All this invests the subject with a kind of melancholy dignity. It is a suggestive circumstance that the bulk of Prince Kropotkin's book is concerned with novels, and that he nevertheless gives the reader an abiding sense of the almost painful seriousness with which Russian literature has been created. In what other country could the same sort of book leave the same impression? The situation where Russia is concerned is as we have stated it, because the soul of the nation has been touched through the centuries almost exclusively to tragic issues, and so has expressed itself in terms of spiritual resignation or rebellion, rarely in those of the lighthearted entertainer, or the amateur of technique. That Russian literature has come to close quarters with the realities of life, that it is, in its essence, thoughtful and direct, is the lesson which Prince Kropotkin enforces on his every page.

He himself commends, and we may appropriately notice in this place, Professor Wiener's "Anthology of Russian Literature," which the student would do well to have on his desk when he is reading Prince Kropotkin. The two stout volumes cover a wide range of prose and verse, forming an admirable library in little for purposes of reference, and the compiler's introductions are clearly written, helpful essays.

IVAN TOURGENIEFF.
(From a photograph.)

A GROUP OF FRIENDS.

Literary England in the Nineteenth Century.

WILLIAM BODHAM DONNE AND HIS FRIENDS. Edited by Catharine B. Johnson. Illustrated. 12mo, pp. 352. E. P. Dutton & Co.

The man whose kind, unselfish and pleasant life is revealed in these letters had a genius for friendship. It is said of him that, like his cousin, the poet Cowper, he possessed the power of fascinating all those who came within his reach. Edward FitzGerald, when both were old, wrote to him, "Your life has been one continual sacrifice of yourself to others," and Fanny Kemble, another long time friend, has left us her remembrance of him as "accomplished scholar, elegant writer, man of exquisite and refined taste, such a gentleman that my sister always said he was the original of the hero in Boccaccio's story of the Falcon." To his English world in general he was known as for seventeen years Censor of Plays—and, marvellous to relate, one beloved by managers—as the writer of sound and engaging criticism, and as the editor of the "Correspondence of George III with Lord North." He inherited from both father and mother uncommonly lovable qualities as well as literary instincts. The editor tells us of Edward Charles Donne, his father, that "he might have sat for the original of old Mr. Caxton in Bulwer Lytton's novel of that name, even to his tame duck, and also in the fact of his always being engaged in writing a book which never was published."

The younger Donne's tutor was the Rev. Mr. Williams, who was a friend of Charles Lamb. It was on a journey from Williams's house, at Bury, back to Enfield, we are reminded, that Lamb quoth in answer to a question as to the prospects of the turnip crop, that he believed it depended "on the number of the boiled legs of mutton." Among Donne's school fellows at Bury St. Edmunds were Edward FitzGerald and James Spedding, and later, at Cambridge, he became the companion of Tennyson, Arthur Hallam, Merivale and Trench. These names and others as well known recur again and again in these letters. Those who in after years became distinguished authors deeply valued Donne's taste and were accustomed to send him their MSS. for criticism. His letters are agreeable in the glimpses which they afford of these friends and in the spirit of loyal affection and intellectual dignity which pervades them. Of the letters addressed to him those of FitzGerald are the most interesting. Their correspondence rarely languished, and they often met. Donne's children loved him—"dear old Fitz"—and their mother wrote of him: "He is a most agreeable person, laughter loving and ever suited to make holiday. The children think so, too, and spare him not." Here is Donne's own picture of his friend in 1836:

> His life and conversation are the most perfectly philosophic of any I know. They approach in grand quiescence to some of the marvels of contentment in Plutarch. He is Diogenes without his dirt. He confesses to so much ease as to make it a question whether since he cannot find, he should